



“The Calling”

2022 Commencement Address

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Before I begin, I would like to thank my family and friends for your endless encouragement, the faculty and staff for your continuous support, and the strength and bravery provided by my Savior. Thank you all for believing in me all these years.

When I began my college search process, I had several prerequisites in mind. The first pre-req was that I would have easy access to communicate with my professors, and to be seen as more than just a name on the roster. The second, was that my school of choice would contain professional opportunities to enhance my educational experience. And finally, I wanted the ability to learn the process of life on my own without being too far from home.

It was during a spring campus visit in 2017 when I realized all three of these pre-reqs could be found at USCB. I could envision myself promenading under the palms, growing my passion for digital creation, to one day being part of the alumni. Five years ago, I realized I had a purpose to fulfill on this campus. The journey to fulfilling our purpose, however, is not linear. All aspirations are prone to challenges, and mine were facing only the beginning.

Most universities have certain academic expectations for their students. Standardized tests determine if a student is prepared for higher education. Through all my years of school though, taking tests were never my forte. It seemed no matter how much I studied, as soon as I came face-to-face with the first question, none of the information would come to my recollection.

These worries remained on my mind until I took both my SAT and ACT, and despite my efforts, it was not enough. Two low scores, and the gap between my calling and admission to USCB seemed to grow more by the day.

I shared these circumstances with the university. As vulnerable as it was, and even now; to mention I could not meet a standard most students could, I refused to accept I was incapable of receiving my degree. A few months later, I received a letter in the mail, and in the fall of 2017, I officially became a sand shark.

What the following four years had in store was beyond anything I hoped for as a student here. I immersed myself in campus life, one extra-curricular after another, with the goal of developing my communication skills. This goal would not have been achieved without the guidance of my mentors. It was because of them, that I was able to cultivate my competitive credentials.

USCB has opportunities galore. One of them being the South Carolina Washington Semester Program. This program provides any South Carolina college student the chance to live in D.C., and intern at any desired congressional office or non-profit. I always dreamt of visiting the heart of our nation, which naturally gravitated me towards this program. I found myself daydreaming, once more, about the

possibilities of what could be. After applying in 2020, and going through the interview process, I was not accepted into the program.

I was so sure this was my purpose here at USCB, and my pre-requisite for growth was in the midst of this opportunity. My determination though, overshadowed my denial, and after applying for the second time, I was accepted into the South Carolina Washington Semester Program in March of 2021; an experience that paved the way for my future.

I could tell you that the education I received was just academically based, but the lessons I learned outside the walls of the classroom exceeded even those. The first of those lessons, was that acknowledging our failures, and continuing to persevere, is the true definition of courage. Secondly, we are defined not by the plethora of chapters studied, but by the decision, to choose to study. Finally, our calling can only be fulfilled if we proceed forward with it. It is the submission of an application, the scheduling of an interview, and the simplicity of saying yes that awaits our pursuit.

There were many times when giving up felt more tangible than persevering, but the reality is that failure will only prevail if we choose to quit. Some of you, are the first ones in your whole family to be a college graduate; for others, you may be the only one who tucks their child into bed, or who cares for their elders. Quitting would not just affect you, but also those who need you. It is our calling, our beam of hope, our seed of faith, that carries us through.

Before leaving this campus, I challenge you today to not fear failure, but to reflect on your accomplishments. Choosing to move forward, despite our failures, is the reason we will be crossing the stage in the next few minutes. It is also the same reason we will be accepted into graduate school or receive a call back from the job we've always wanted. The same drive, persistence, and diligence that brought you to graduation day, are the same ones that will bring you success in your careers. Never stop discovering your purpose, never stop pursuing your dreams, for taking the first steps forward is a proclamation of victory in itself. So, congratulations class of 2022, let us take those first steps together, today. Thank you.